



# CUT-OFF-DOOR RHYMES

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ELIZA SPROAT TURNER

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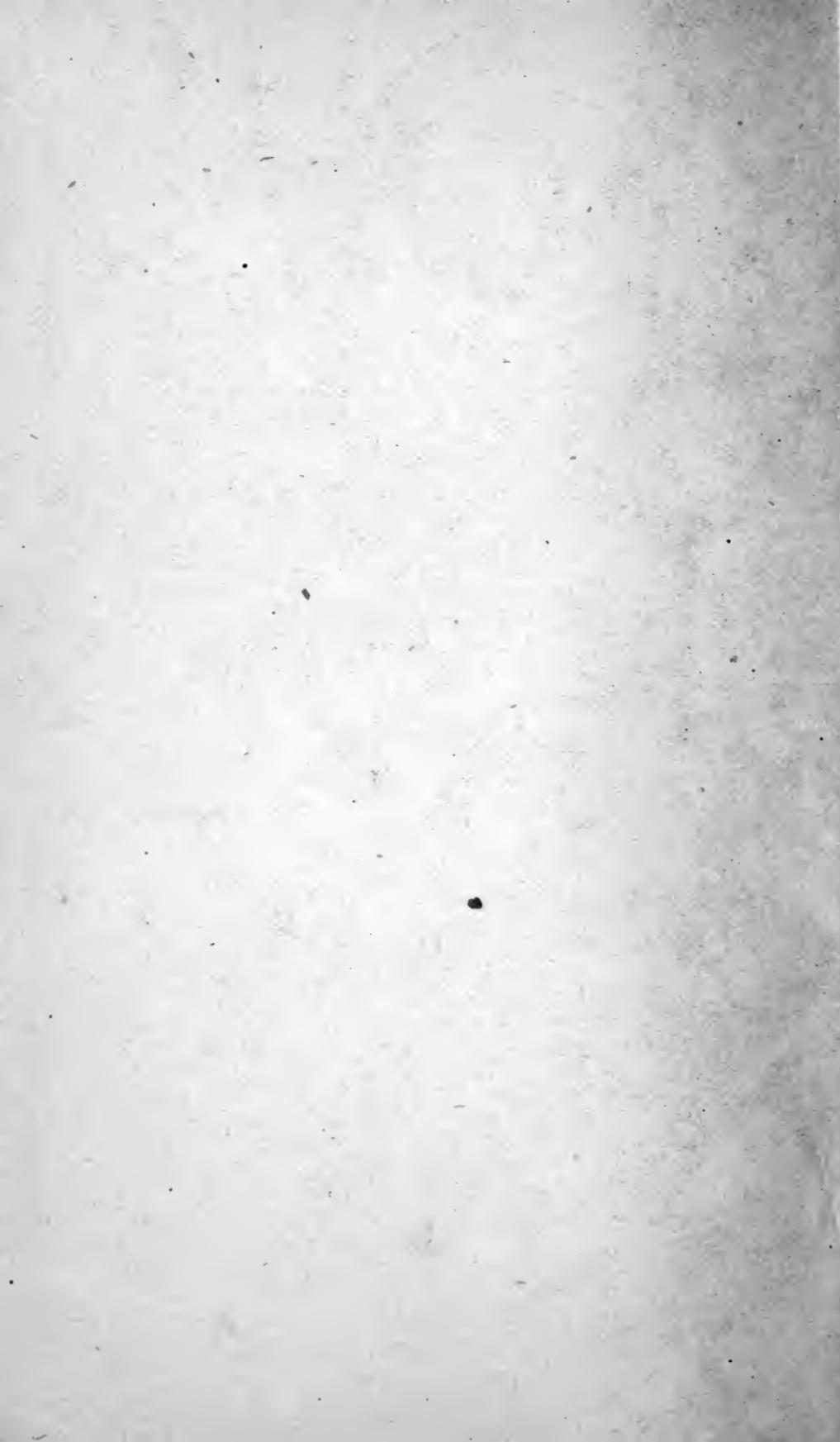
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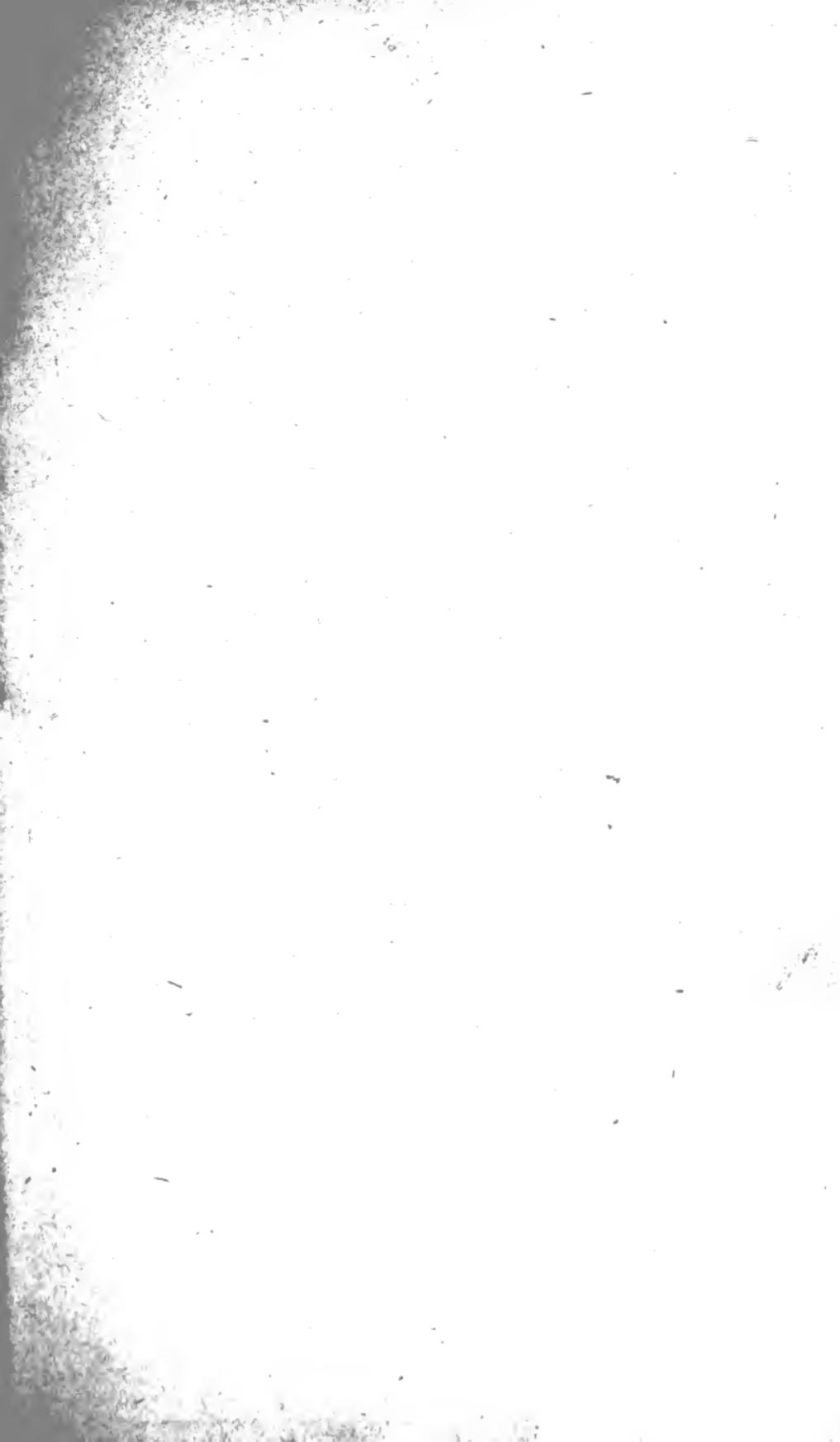
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.













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# OUT-OF-DOOR RHYMES.

BY

ELIZA SPROAT TURNER.

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## OUT-OF-DOOR RHYMES.

---

### HOW THEIR CREEDS DIFFERED.

---

BEDDED in stone a toad lived well,  
Cold and content as toad could be:  
As safe from harm as monk in cell,  
Almost as safe from good was he.

And "What is life?" he said, and dozed;  
Then, waking, "Life is rest," quoth he;  
"Each creature God in stone hath closed,  
That each may have tranquillity.

“And GOD himself lies coiled in stone,  
Nor wakes nor moves to any call;  
Each lives unto himself alone,  
And cold and night envelope all.”

He said, and slept. With curious ear  
Close to the stone, a serpent lay;  
“ ‘Tis false,” he hissed with crafty sneer,  
“For well I know GOD wakes alway.

“And what is life but wakefulness,  
To glide through snares, alert and wise—  
With plans too deep for neighbors’ guess,  
And haunts too close for neighbors’ eyes?

“For all the earth is thronged with foes,  
And dark with fraud, and set with toils:  
Each lies in wait, on each to close,  
And God is bribed with share of spoils.”

High in the boughs a small bird sang,  
And marvelled such a creed could be.  
“How strange and false!” his comment rang;  
“For well I know that life is glee:

“For all the plain is flushed with bloom,  
And all the wood with music rings,  
And in the air is scarcely room  
To wave our myriad flashing wings;

“And GOD, amid His angels high,  
Spreads over all in brooding joy;  
On great wings borne, entranced they lie;  
And all is bliss without alloy.”

“Ah, careless birdling, say’st thou so?”  
Thus mused a man, the trees among:  
“Thy creed is wrong; for well I know  
That life must not be spent in song.

“For what is life but toil of brain,  
And toil of hand, and strife of will—  
To dig and forge, with loss and pain,  
The truth from lies, the good from ill—

“And ever out of self to rise  
Toward love and law and constancy?  
But with sweet love comes sacrifice,  
And with great law comes penalty.

“And GOD, who asks a constant soul,  
He tries his creatures sore and long:  
Steep is the way, and far the goal,  
And time is small to waste in song.”

He sighed. From heaven an angel yearned:  
With equal love his glances fell  
Upon the man with soul upturned,  
Upon the toad within its cell.

And, strange! upon that wondrous face  
Shone pure all natures, well allied:  
There subtlety was turned to grace,  
And slow content was glorified;

And labor, love and constancy  
Put off their dross and mortal guise,  
And with the look that is to be  
They looked from those immortal eyes.

To the faint man the angel strong  
Reached down from heaven and shared his  
pain;  
The one in tears, the one in song,  
The cross was borne betwixt them twain.

He sang the careless glee that lies  
In woodbird's heart without alloy.

He sang the joy of sacrifice:  
And still he sang, "*All life is joy.*"

But how, while yet he clasped the pain,  
Thrilled through with bliss the angel smiled,  
I know not, with my human brain,  
Nor how the two he reconciled.



## OLD AND NEW.

---

I KNOW a narrow forest path, that climbs  
The mountain side, arched thick with  
chestnut leaves  
And maple, and the black-green massive oak,  
Guarding from highest noon their underworld  
Of beauteous life that cannot bear the light—  
A curious underworld of mild decay;  
Each prone trunk, lying ever where he fell,  
Enameled with fine lichens, couched in ferns,  
While, stitch by stitch, soft, broidering mosses  
make  
His gay green shroud, pricked out with coral  
cups;

And each unseemly rotten gap is filled  
With orange fungus, and the straight club moss  
Spreads like a small pine forest round his feet.  
Here, wandering all alone, I heard a voice  
Where human voice was not; and, turning soft,  
I saw a wonder: from a palsied oak,  
Clothed half in leaves and half in thready moss,  
Came an old Dryad, parting painfully  
The stiff, time-crusted trunk that scarce could  
yield:

A woody, wheezing Dryad, with gray hair  
Like that long threaded moss, and fumbling  
foot

Unused to motion; slow she climbed the hill,  
I following; many times she paused for rest.

So, blinking in the unaccustomed light,  
And gasping in the too live mountain air,  
She reached at last an old forgotten lake,  
Sunk in the mountain top—black, deep, and still;  
Hard to approach across the quaking marge  
Of treacherous seeming land that was not land  
For all its green, but fair and dreadful bog,  
Which, year by year encroaching, pushed the  
line

Of water-lilies inward, till the time  
When they should close above that bald Undine  
Who, wakened by the plaintive wheezing call  
Of her upon the shore, emerged to greet  
Her ancient crony, gazed uncertainly  
Upon her, then, remembering wistfully

Her broken dream, would fain return ; but, held  
By something in the voice, stood doubtful still,  
Pushing away a clinging leech, which straight  
Returning, she desisted with a sigh.

“ And am I, then, forgotten by my friend ? ”  
Said Dryad ; “ Yet 'tis scarce a century  
Since last we met ; I cannot sure have changed ? ”  
Slowly the Naiad, in a dreaming voice  
That seemed far off ;  
“ Not we ; the world has changed.  
This beauteous lake, once haunted by a god,  
The burden of whose glorious songs we still  
Might faintly hear—if any cared to hear,  
Among the modern echoes ; these fair shores  
Whose very earth is precious with the print

Of stately footsteps, and whose every stone  
Is written close with stories of the past—  
All are forgotten; all the world is changed  
Since you, the loveliest Dryad of the wood,  
And I, the noblest Naiad of the wave,  
Were recognized and worshipped,—all is  
changed.

What prestige have these raw-barked modern  
trees,

Plebeian, doomed to early menial use?

What birthright have these nameless mountain  
streams,

Galloping vulgar hoydens—night and day  
They violate my silence; night and day  
This clattering noise of brooklets hurrying down

To join the larger clamor of the streams—  
The reckless, leaping streams, gone mad with  
haste,  
That would not stand an hour to rest the world.  
Their hateful voices call into my dreams;  
Their worthless words forever agitate  
My deep self-contemplation."

As she spoke,  
A strange wild song rose clear through her  
complaint:

Onward, merrily onward!  
Nothing can check my way;  
The crowding ferns bend over,  
Wooing me back to play;  
The threatening rocks rise tall,

On every side a wall,  
Breaking my waves to spray;  
But for me, I shall not stay.  
See, I break from my thrall—  
Foaming out from the darkness,  
Into the crimson sunset  
Merrily down I come.  
Deep, deep in my waves  
His face the hot sun laves.  
All the hill is alight;  
Every tree is a torch;  
And all the air is flame.  
Hark! that song of a stream  
That rings through my daily dream;  
It is the voice of my lover

Calling afar to me.  
Onward, steadily onward !  
Into the growing twilight,  
Into the midnight darkness,  
Out to the morrow's sunrise ;  
Ever with firmer feet,  
Until we two shall meet,  
And, this lone wandering over,  
Our true life is begun  
When the two lives clash in one.  
Ha ! I long for the shock ;  
I plunge from rock to rock,  
And the plunges cost me dear :  
But for me, elate  
With the joy of my coming fate,

I suffer, and have no fear.

Hist, cease!

. . . A sudden dream of peace

Holds me in its spell.

Is it I, so deep and still?

Picturing on my bosom

Reed and bending blossom,

And my ever-following ferns?

Close crowd the alder bushes;

And the long rude bramble pushes

To the front; above me reach

The flat boughs of the beech,

Flecking my breast with shadows,

A thousand crimped leaf-shadows

Under the noonday sun;

And, out from beneath a stone,  
Flashes a sudden silver,  
And circles, and is gone.  
And over, skimming low,  
The jeweled dragon-fly  
Vanishes and returns  
And stands so motionless,  
His life you scarce would guess ;  
And all is glad and still :  
And through and through I thrill  
With a thought I cannot tell.  
Ha, I know ! I see  
My life that is to be.  
It is truth ; in that swift moment  
The pulse of the far Ocean

Rose and sank in me.  
Movement and silence.  
Now a change awaits me,  
Change, and noise, and pain ;  
Roaring and confusion—  
Throes of dissolution—  
Ah, the brink is near !  
I suffer, but have no fear.  
Over—I swoon—  
I darken—I die !  
Down . . . Is it I  
That lie so brokenly ?  
All my dark substance  
Tortured into whiteness,  
Shattered into rainbows,

Glorified with pain?  
And can I rise again?  
See, I gather my force;  
Greatening on my course  
Till, the first meeting over  
Between me and my lover,  
In blending we discover  
Our mission toward the sea.  
Is it to wander free  
Ever through forest ferns?  
Is it to dive unswerving  
Into the dreadful earth,  
Feeling our way in darkness  
Toward a second birth  
In some far unknown land?

Is it to sweep superb  
Around some glorious city?  
Or, stayed by wheel and curb,  
Drawn into thousand sluices  
For daily drudging uses,  
In every house to stand?  
Yet are we one, and whole;  
The myriad-parted soul  
Shall labor in joy and patience  
For every human need;  
Waiting its final meed—  
Pure amid loathsome soiling,  
Free amid slavish toiling.  
Hark! I wake from my dream  
To the sound of a nearing stream.

I know the call of my lover  
Thundering down the gorge.

“You hear!” she said, with mild intolerant sigh,  
But spoke to air, for Dryad, long ago,  
Fearing the evening damp, had faltered home;  
Unconscious that the mould had seized her hair,  
And that a leathery fungus stout had sprung  
Between her fingers, thinking she was dead.  
Relieved, the Naiad turned, and sighing, sought  
The lake-depth, where she hides from all things  
new,

And dreams of all things old. Above her, wheel  
Near-sighted bats, that think the trees ill-placed  
Because they strike against them: and, around,  
The melancholy whippoorwills complain,

Wailing a wrong they never tried to mend.  
Still deepens that marsh luxury of green,  
Crowding the lilies inward, till the stems  
Tangle her feet; and, "Am I lake or land?"  
Sometimes she asks in sudden deadly fear:  
And soon, forgetting, peers to shape the shore,  
But cannot for the mists herself has raised;  
Or strives to understand some rising voice,  
But cannot for the echoes that repeat,  
And add, and modify, and reproduce,  
Until the voice is lost. Or, baffled so,  
She feels about those slimy lily stems,  
And fails to grasp, and lapses into dream;  
While, narrowing, creeps the sure encroaching  
doom.

## ALL MOTHER.

---

IF I had an eagle's wings,  
How grand to sail the sky!

But I should drop to the earth  
If I heard my baby cry.

My baby—my darling,  
The wings may go, for me.

If I were a splendid queen,  
With a crown to keep in place,  
Would it do for a little wet mouth  
To rub all over my face?

My baby—my darling,  
The crown may go, for me.

## IN THE GARDEN.

---

LINGERING late in garden talk,  
My friend and I, in the prime of June,

The long tree-shadows across the walk  
Hinted the waning afternoon.

The bird songs died in twitterings brief;  
The clover was folding, leaf on leaf.

Sweetest season of all the year,  
And sweetest of years in all my time,  
Earth is so bright, and heaven so near,  
Sure life itself must be just at prime.  
Soft flower faces that crowd our way,  
Have you no word for us to-day?

Each in its nature stands arrayed :  
Heliotropes that drink the sun ;  
Violet shadows that haunt the shade ;  
Poppies, by every wind undone ;  
Lilies, just over-proud for grace ;  
Pansies, that laugh in every face.

Great bloused peonies half adoze ;  
Mimulus, wild in change and freak ;  
Dainty flesh of the China rose,  
Tender and fine as a fairy's cheek.  
(I watched him finger the folds apart  
To get at the blush in its inmost heart.)

Lo, at our feet what small blue eyes !  
And still as we looked their numbers came

Like shy stars out of the evening skies  
When the east is gray and the west is flame.  
"Gather, you rself, and give to me  
These 'forget-me-nots,'" said he.

Word of command I take not ill;  
When love commands, love likes to obey;  
But, while my words my thoughts fulfill,  
"Forget me not," I will not say.  
Vows for the false; a loyal mind  
Will not be bound, and will not bind.

In your need of me I put my trust,  
And your lack of need shall be my ban;  
'Tis time to remember, when you must,  
Time to forget me when you can.

Yet cannot the wildest thought of mine  
Fancy a life distuned from thine.

Small reserve is between us two ;  
'Tis heart to heart, and brain to brain.  
Bare as an arrow, straight and true  
Struck his thought to my thought again.  
" Not distuned ; one song of praise,  
First and second, our lives shall raise."

Close we stood in the rosy glow,  
Watching the cloudland tower and town ;  
Watching the double Castor grow  
Out of the east as the sun rolled down.  
" Yonder, how star drinks star," said he ;

“Yield thou so—live thou in me.”

Nay, we are close—we are not one,  
More than those stars that seem to shine  
In the self-same place, yet each a sun,  
Each distinct in its sphere divine.  
Like to Himself art thou, we know;  
Like to Himself am I also.

What did He mean, when He sent us forth,  
Soul and soul, to this lower life,  
Each with a purpose, each a worth,  
Each an arm for the human strife?  
Armor of thine is not for me;  
Neither is mine adjudged by thee.

See, in the lower life we stand,  
Weapons donned, and the strife begun ;  
Higher nor lower ; hand to hand ;  
Each helps each with the glad "Well done!"  
Each girds each to nobler ends ;  
No less lovers because such friends.

So, in the peace of the closing day,  
Resting, as striving, side by side,  
"What does He mean ?" again we say ;  
"For what new life are our souls allied ?"  
Comes to my ken, in death's advance,  
Life in its next significance.

See yon tortoise, he crossed the path

At noon, to hide where the grass is tall ;  
In a slow, dull sense of the sun-king's wrath,  
Burrowing close to the garden wall.  
Think, could we flood that torpid brain  
With man's whole life—love, joy and pain !

— So, methinks, is the life we lead  
To the larger life that yet shall be :  
Narrow in thought, uncouth in deed,  
Crawling, who yet shall walk so free ;  
Walking, who yet on wings shall soar ;  
Flying, who shall need wings no more.

Lo, in the larger life we stand !  
We drop the weapon, we take the tool ;

We serve with mind who served with hand,  
We live by law who lived by rule.  
And our old earth-love, with its mortal bliss,  
Was the fancy of babe for babe, to this.  
Visions begone ! About us rise  
The worlds, on their work majestic sent.  
Down in the dew the small fire-flies  
Make up a tremulous firmament.  
Stars in the grass, and roses dear,  
Earth is full sweet, tho' heaven is near.



## WHIPPOORWILL.

(DELAWARE WATER GAP.)

---

MAN.

LIGHTS of gold—shades of brown;  
Now the evening breeze is blurring  
All our water-pictures, stirring  
Seeming solid heath and hill.  
Large and red, the sun rolls down;  
Is he gone? Yet see, the same,  
Air ablaze, waves aflame.  
Hark! a voice upon the hill—  
“Whippoorwill, Whippoorwill!”

I'm a scholar, by the way,  
With a curious gift at learning,  
By some natural, strange discerning,  
Lore of wood and heath and hill.  
I know all the creatures say ;  
I can render, as we walk,  
The soliloquizing talk  
Of yon pious Whippoorwill :  
Hark ! again—"Whippoorwill!"

## BIRD.

Whippoorwill, day is o'er ;  
Not a voice to break the quiet.

I must haste to profit by it,  
—Softly, not to rouse the hill.  
Breezes, hush! Waves, speak lower!  
Twenty *ave's* I may win  
Ere the rest their task begin.  
“Whippoorwill, Whippoorwill.”  
(Silent, all !) “Whippoorwill.”

Whippoorwill—that counts thirteen;  
How remiss I find the others.  
Were it not my duty, brothers,  
To report you? Then I will.  
Saints, indeed! What can it mean?  
Hist—I hear low voices rise—  
Would you take me by surprise?

Here I stand, thirteen gained ;  
“Whippoorwill, Whippoorwill !”

Dark and sweet. Star by star  
From the river depth is rising ;  
Three more voices ; 'tis surprising,  
Such irreverence in the trill !

“Whippoorwill,” near and far.

Rattle, mumble, how they go.

*I* speak out, distinct and slow,—  
“Whippoorwill, Whippoorwill,”  
Listen, all : “Whippoorwill !”

Do they feel a word they say ?  
—Vesper voices fill the valley ;

Now indeed 'tis time to rally;  
Ha! they gain upon me still.  
Use decorum, brothers, pray!  
Not so loud—keep your place—  
Feel more reverence—what a pace!  
Take your time—hold your tongue—  
“Whippoorwill, Whippoorwill!”



## MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

---

### REQUEST.

THE red day is melting into even,  
And the even looks on you and me alone,  
As you stand tall and clear against the  
westward,  
With heaven's glory added to your own.

The sun creeps ablaze among your tresses,  
The winds press unhidden to your brow;  
If you ever mean to give me what you  
promised,  
I am ready for it now:—give it now.

The sun greets the earth before his parting,  
The waves kiss the shore and trip away,  
And cloud leans to cloud across the heaven,  
And I wonder you can dare to answer nay.

By the brown stars that bend in mocking  
o'er me,  
By the brown clouds that loosen on your  
brow,  
By the wreathed lips that taunt me with their  
redness,  
I am sworn to have it now:—give it now.

## REFUSAL.

THE last words I gave you when we parted,  
My last words for evermore shall be:—  
You may borrow all the sweets of all the  
summer,  
But you'll never borrow kisses, sir, from  
me.

I lend not, I sell not, I give not;  
And yet they are to me as little worth,  
As the common drops of rain, before the sun-  
god  
Has spanned with them the heaven and the  
earth.

The young moon is weaving spells around us;  
The sweet darkness witches us to stay;  
The late darkness creeping all around us  
Is warning us away:—come away.

You would surely never take what I deny you,  
And yet it were a sin to break a vow:  
But if you *meant* to steal it, as I fear me,  
You had better do it now:—take it now.



## RAIN-DAYS.

---

THE warm Spring rains, bloom-pregnant,  
    slip to earth,  
Melting black Winter into rosy May.  
The sudden Summer rains come hurrying  
    down,  
Eager with great quick drops to satisfy  
The heat-split grass, and choking, gasping  
    dust  
That drinks and drinks, and lies at last content.  
The wild Fall rains rush down like mailed hosts;  
Spoil the bird-homesteads, and tramp out the  
    flowers,

And rot the forests. Then chill Winter rains,  
Sad Winter rains, dead Winter rains, each drop  
A ghost of old Spring freshness. All to-day  
Winter wept cheerlessly, but I, within,  
Sit far from cheerless, while the outside night  
Contests my hearth-light, peopling all the room  
With dancing flames and shadows.

What am I  
But ghost of old Spring freshness? Yet not so;  
That poor old wandering wind goes sobbing by,  
Still doting on the unresponsive earth,  
Still calling, scolding, pleading; not one flower  
Will the clay answer. Is the earth then dead?  
Is she then old? not so; from that vast heart

There rose no last Spring's bloom but left its  
seed

In the same bosom ; not a forest chief  
Dropped, shred by shred, his leafy glory down,  
But she will make of them his future crown.

She never lost a leaf, but in herself  
Garners all seasons as they seem to die.  
So have I garnered in my deepening heart  
My seasons as they came ; so stand I now,  
Dead to world-calls, and listening momently  
For my Spring summons to an unknown land.  
And these wild nights, when outside cold and

dark

Make home and hearth so dear, I sit and read  
In the quick coals all far off memories

Of home, wife, children; each new love that  
came

Building its cell of sweetness in my heart,  
Which must be full as then until I die.

Friends, children, all are gone; I am so old:  
But still, and much of late, they come again,  
And still the dead rain falls, and in its sound  
I hear the music of old rain-days gone.

God bless the rain-days! Just as dark a time  
Gave a pet brother to my love and care.

That strange dull afternoon they called me up  
To the death-chamber, when about my neck  
My mother, she a widow, wound her arms  
And drew my face to hers, and gave her child,

Her last and darling, to my boyish care.  
Sure the kind Father must have smiled to see  
The uncouth work, as I—a schoolboy lump  
Of brawling crudeness—all at once put on  
A parent's anxious looks and careful ways.  
Ah, sweet to rest come memories of past  
strife,  
And sweet to placid age youth's conquered  
cares,  
Pains alchemized to joys, ease born of throes,  
Old loves forever new.—My brother gone,  
We had grown old together, yet wert thou  
Still young to me, my friend, my mate, my care.  
Still gentle, trustful, woman-natured. Now  
God and thy mother keep thee; Watch for me.

Still drop the echoes of old rain-days gone.  
I see a woodpath, and a broken shed  
Raised by some woodman of an earlier time ;  
Its rude, low roof, age-thick with pulpy moss,  
Its walls a mass of forest vines ; above,  
The skies are all in conflict ; lumbering clouds,  
Rallied too suddenly, come rolling up  
In huge confusion, leaving here and there  
Odd patches of astonished blue ; anon  
They stoop and mingle, and the first drops fall  
Crisp through the hot leaves. Not alone I sit  
Storm prisoned ; there's a dear hand clasped  
    in mine,  
Clasped first that day. My fearful eager eyes  
Fasten on eyes most earnest and serene,

Looked into first that rain-day, when the storm  
Surprised us on our way : so many times  
My struggling heart had yielded to its fears,  
And left the love-words budding on my lips  
Frost-caught ere one had blossomed into  
speech.

And yet not bashful she ; a flippant word  
Had power to flush her cheek ; a passing glance  
Could make her spirit shrink ; but never called  
A soul to hers in truth and gravity,  
And went unanswered ; so, as still my tongue  
Fared faltering through its story, in her eyes  
Sat a strong, quiet angel, aiding me.

Thus long we sat, half dreaming, half aware,

The while, unnoted then, remembered now,  
From change to change, from plunging seas  
of rain  
To quiet drippings ; all at once a beam  
Of full, triumphant sunset broke our dream.  
Then, slowly taking thought, we planned to  
live  
More highly for each other ; planned to weave  
Our courtship close with friendship ; humbly  
vowed  
To let no pride between us, no light word,  
A thought, a film, a veil, an air-built wall  
To shut us from each other unaware.  
So, as we sat, the little shed became  
A sanctuary, and all the air was rife

With unseen being, till the blessing closed  
Round us, within us, blending soul with soul  
For an eternity,—two loves, two lives  
In one,—my lesser heart absorbing hers  
As lies some bounded lake and holds all  
heaven.

My Mary! Back through ranks of outworn  
years,  
Through dulling age to youth, I reach to seize  
This memory; up through death and time to  
thee  
I send it as a greeting; Watch for me.

## A MERRY OLD SOUL.

---

LOOSE foolish lips ; wrinkled eyelids,  
Hiding the rheumy eyes within ;  
White dirty hair upon his forehead,  
White dirty stubble on his chin.  
He lodges with a friend, in the cellar,  
The cellar door his roof and his throne :  
'Tis last night's merry old toper,  
Musing this morning alone.

'Last night we had a roaring supper ;  
Last night I sang a jolly song ;  
Now 'tis the miserable morning,  
And all's changed, and all seems so wrong.

I can't work, I'm not fit—too shaky.  
I can't find my other shoe ; I'll try ;  
—I won't try, it makes me unhappy.—  
Suppose I should end it all, and die.

“ The hearse takes you up—of course, no  
mourners ;  
And Jake airs the lodgings—no, he'd save  
To dig me in at once, in the cellar ;  
Worms there, most likely, for a grave.  
But then there's the water, that's improper,  
And most like unwholesome ;—by the way  
There's quite too much water (and I'll say it  
To his face) for the rent we have to pay.

“And just look at that now—my sunshine  
Gone to the other cellar door !  
Ugh, but I’m chilly !—it’s always  
Such a hard world for the poor.  
There’s a good bone by the gutter,  
Still, it’s a trouble ; if I try  
Will that strange dog let me eat it ?  
See how he watches—let it lie.

“Who made a beast of me, I wonder ?  
Jake, maybe, tampering with my gin ?  
No ! tavern politics,—that brought me  
Down to his clutches, to begin.  
Wait . . . 'Twas the Colonel’s little dinners ;  
Prime fellows—ladies all away.

Ha ! 'twas my mother, at her table,  
Toasting her little boy in play.

“ Here comes a lady—and clean, too ;  
Like . . . Who was that I used to know ?  
—Well, maybe some of ours, mud lilies,  
Picked young, would make as fair a show.  
But this one’s a lady. How she stands there !  
Aint you ashamed to look at me ?  
—Damn you ! take your eyes off,—they hurt  
me,—  
And yet, why care ? Let it be.”

## A L I C E.

---

WHAT shall we do with Alice?  
Our youngest and our pride,  
And yet she brings us more of care  
Than all the world beside.  
She is the only drone of five,  
A lovely, useless thing,  
With a heart as rich as summer,  
And a face as fresh as spring.

What *can* we do with Alice?

She idles so at school;

She decks with buds the good dame's cap,  
And fears nor rod nor rule.

And while her sisters o'er their books  
With puzzled, earnest faces pore,  
She makes a baby-bower of leaves  
Beside the school-house door.

She will not heed the morrow;  
She will not take to care:  
Her eyes, like suns, make every cloud  
Their laughing colors wear.  
And if the earth be green or bare,  
And if the sky be dark or clear,  
She carries with her everywhere  
Her own bright atmosphere.

My idle, aimless Alice !

She'll waste the livelong day,  
Where quivering gold and shadows  
O'er the lazy lilies play.

Where great trees guard the silver song  
That lapses ever tinkling by,  
And round its bank the violets throng  
To see the mirrored sky.

She looks up to the stranger

With her arms upon his knee;

She smiles upon the Master,

Though a dreaded man is he :

She shrinks not from the crawling worm,

Nor startles at the wood-snake's hiss :

She shouts to hear the rolling storm,  
In strange enraptured bliss.

That tree the wind uprooted,  
And flung across the stream,  
She found to-day, and left her play,  
Amid its boughs to dream.  
With bare feet in the water,  
And arms bathed deep in flowers,  
She carols, smiling to herself,  
Through all the happy hours.

My fearless, wilful Alice !  
We cannot make her shrink,

Nor hide her face with bashful grace,  
Nor fear what others think.  
She is too sure of kindly looks  
To learn another's eye to shun :—  
But God, who hid the violet, bade  
The rose stand in the sun.

My useless, aimless Alice !  
Yet from those night-blue eyes  
Strange thoughts oft step forth lazily,  
Like stars from darkening skies :  
And sudden tones have sanctified  
The little songs she sung ;  
And simple words, that seem inspired,  
Have faltered from her tongue.

At early even, kneeling  
In the holy twilight gloom,  
When songs are hushed and prayers go round,  
And blessings fill the room :  
We plead for health and common joys,  
To all the rest :—for *her* we say,  
“We know her not ; whate’er her lot,  
Dear GOD, be Thou her stay.”



## AN OUTCAST.

---

I SAW a stately dwelling, all alight,  
Beaming forth pleasure from its many eyes  
Till night was fain to smile ; and one without  
Stood gazing on the joyful revellers,  
Like a lost angel peering in at heaven.  
A woman, yet not woman ; on her face  
Beauty sat mourner for lost loveliness.  
A woman, but her bright mouth sin had kissed,  
And branding out the sweetness, left the rose.

She leaned against the window, and gazed long  
Upon the deepening revelry ; her ear

Drank in the music of fresh happy voices,—  
Music that turned to discord as it fell  
Among her memories ; then a bitter stream  
Rose from the poisoned fountain of her soul,  
And poured itself in words.

“Sing on, laugh on  
Poor self-complacent clay—poor feeble cloud  
Of insects glittering gay in fortune’s sun !  
How brave ye shine, unknowing ye are dust,  
Secure in untried virtue ; if but once  
Temptation fell upon you like a storm,  
How many proud would fall dismayed to earth,  
How many pure would rise with soiled wings,  
Of those who, were I now to seek their feet,

Would shriek, and faint, and shun my touch  
like death?

“ Ye fools ! was ever yet a flower so pure  
That did the wanton sun shine hot enough  
He could not wither ? Ye are only flowers ;  
The world’s few stars, the few high burning  
hearts

O’er whom sin never found a talisman,  
They are too brave to spurn or fear the fallen,  
But dare to smile on all.—O God ! kind God !  
But would they smile on me ? If I could kneel  
To ask heart-charities, is there one hand  
Would raise me ? If I tear it from my heart,  
This old sin-cancer, is there one would pour

Soft words instead of scorn upon my wounds ?  
Too well I know, not one. Then, heart, be  
calm,

And rock thy sins to rest ; there's still a joy  
For those who cannot rise,—it is to fall ;  
To cast off hope, as divers doff their garments,  
And, plunging headlong, sound the depths of  
sin.

“Stand back, thou craven conscience, 'tis too  
late !

Away, thou traitor shame, I know thee not !  
I'll hide my hunted soul in wickedness,  
As some poor sun-tormented traveller  
Leaps in the poisoned stream. And at the last,

When life and death are dead, and God is all,  
Sitting to square accounts 'twixt earth and  
heaven,

When every soul shall plead its puny cause,  
I will stand up and say, 'LORD, curse the  
world,

For they have *all* transgressed against thy  
law.

My heart was thirsting for a drop of kindness  
On its steep, lonely journey back toward  
heaven,

And they refreshed me not; my soul was  
naked,

Shrinking and trembling in its shame, and  
calling

Most piteously for shelter from the eyes  
Of tittering virtue, and they clothed me not.'

"Then GOD will smile to see the frightened  
looks

Of those who thought their places sure in  
heaven;

And Satan laugh to greet the trooping souls  
Of those who had denied him on the earth.

Then . . . Ah! my traitor heart, my cruel heart,  
How canst thou, with thy melting memories,  
Steal from me this poor fancy of revenge?

"The years come rushing backward like a flood:  
I see a dear, time-tinted cottage peep  
From out a whispering luxury of leaves;

I see a little child upon the door-sill,  
Where, in the sleepy afternoon, the sun  
Strives lazily to pass the shadows, making  
All hues of gold and green ; she sits alone,  
Her rosy little cheek upon her hand,  
Spelling out 'S-i-n' in the old story book,  
And wondering what it means :—Can this be I ?

" The years roll back upon me like a flood.  
I see a stately girl, with delicate brow,  
And eager eyes that look upon the world  
Expecting nought but truth :—Can this be I ?  
Sure I am young and pure again—old thoughts  
From that sweet time when all my thoughts  
were hopes,

Fall like a shower of violets on my brain.  
There is an angel busy at my heart,  
Searching its corners and dark crevices  
For virtues crushed and lost among its scars.

“Lost? No, they live! I hear the God-breathed voice  
That as I lay awake at dead of night  
Said, ‘Soul, thou art immortal; sin was made  
For thee to vanquish; as a mother’s love  
Denies her clinging child, and sets afar  
The tottering feet that so must learn their use,  
From thee, my well-beloved, I recede,  
That so by striving thou shalt reach to me,  
And grow thereby.’

“ Ah, soul, did I not strive ?  
Did I not conquer ? Thou, who knowest all,  
Did ever Satan find more subtle means  
To snare one child ? Yet with what zeal of  
youth  
Did I and Want, embracing, turn our backs  
Upon the host of ugly, petted sins  
That crawl to earth’s high places—with what  
schemes  
Of glorious, living, daily martyrdom  
I fashioned out the future—all in vain,—  
O yearning, striving years, and all in vain !

“ Just GOD, where lagged thine angels, when  
at last,

Amid my prayers, amid my victories,  
One slinking masked crime, so masked, it  
seemed  
A virtue, with its sudden backward thrust  
Murdered my soul?"



## ANOTHER CHANCE.

---

I LEAN from my window above the river,  
To watch the winds and the waves at play;  
But still as I watch, the waves forever  
Slip from my gaze and glide away.

Stay, blithe wind, and stand, fair river,  
And leave me never, thou dear To-day !  
But still as I ask, the hours forever  
Slip from my life, and glide away.

I lose the waves, till my eyes are weary ;  
They will not tarry, they seek the main.

On, still on ! is their chorus cheery,  
Soon we shall blend and rise again.

I lose my days, till I stand despairing,  
For those were idle, and these are vain ;  
Yet hope, my heart, for the time is nearing  
When I may live my life again.



## EVENING THOUGHTS.

---

O SUNLESS, cheerless day ! The doleful  
clouds  
Have wept and wept ; the wind, with ceaseless  
whine,  
Has wandered through the rain ; now stooping  
low  
To plague the sullen stream, now whirling high,  
And diving down some chimney, where the  
dame  
Strove vainly for a cheerful evening fire,  
Beating the smoke into her patient face.

Now skimming earth so swift, that the long  
grass

Grows shrill with pain; now blustering past  
the flowers

And through the angry corn; now to the stream,  
Making the willows sulk, and flounce, and trail  
Their wet arms on the ground; now, scorning  
earth,

He's up to fight the clouds. Good wind, sweet  
wind,

Battle them sore—scatter the enemy  
That we may gain the farewell of the sun,  
And catch the blessing. Joy! The weary foes  
Have raised the siege, and now, dispersing slow,  
Retire; the trees, all dripping, stand ablaze,

Thrilled by the cordial light, that suddenly  
Enclasping, sets each separate soft green leaf  
Quivering with life ; till, with majestic joy,  
They fling on high their bold ambitious arms  
In hope to touch the skies that seem so near.  
The loving clouds bend downward from the blue,  
And form, and melt, and break like hills of foam,  
Paling to silver,—blushing back to rose ;  
Gathering in mountains of rich purple glooms ;  
Deepening to awful caverns and strange  
chasms ;  
Then breaking, softening, melting, till the sky  
Grows dark, and deep, and clear, and a keen eye  
Can almost reach to heaven, whence issuing  
forth,

With their fresh glory on them, one by one  
The great stars take their places, and poor earth  
Stands in the presence of the universe.  
Shrink back, thou small mean orb, into the  
dark ;  
Heaven passes ; veil thee close with leaves and  
clouds !

Yet I would rather live thy life, sweet earth,  
With human woes and joys, than be a star  
Hard smiling in cold beauty, bright and bleak.  
I envy not your glory, proud, pale stars,  
Each on a separate throne,—do ye not pine,  
Flinging your dark arms vainly through the  
blank,

For some sweet human touch? Do ye not  
yearn,

Searching through space with sadly burning  
eyes,

For our poor leaf-clad orb, where some small  
flower

Leaning its cheek against another near,  
Loves its frail life away? What's life but love?  
What soul in highest heaven can more than love?

O earth, whose sighs are sweet, whose cares  
are dear,

Whose smiles, like rainbows, live more bright  
for tears,—

Most precious earth, I hail thee! This fair night,

While yet my keen-strung soul, like some  
rough harp

Thrilled with a breath from heaven, swells high  
and loud

With music not its own I sing to thee:—

Of woods and waters, glorious in the sun:

Of flowers and fountains, yielding their fair lives

In beauty and in light; of daily smiles

Poured from the founts of ever-flowing love,

On ever-thirsting hearts; of summer eves,

When heaven brings kindly close to harvest day

And bids the laborer rest; of children's voices

Ringing their welcomes from his waiting door;

Of sunsets Catholic, that pour at large

Cathedral glory into cottage panes.

Shadows and stars and music for earth's night;  
Sunshine and flowers and laughter for her day;  
And love for all. Thou Life, who sit'st above,  
Creating life, aye sprinkling space with  
worlds

From Thy dim fingers,—not so much for these  
I bow to Théé, as that in this far earth  
Thou hast made human hearts, and taught them  
love.

For Love, she is invincible; 'through her,  
Frail, faltering man, brave, struggling, con-  
quering man,  
Towers o'er the angels innocent and untried;  
And Love, she is omnipotent; no soul  
Without her tending, could outlive its clay,

So brutish else, and weak. We wake, and sleep;  
We hunger, and are cold; we grow, and die;  
We strive with weaker brothers for their spoils,  
And yield to stronger; spider-like we toil  
And plot to snare our fellows; or, like ants,  
We build wise plans, and stand in blind amaze  
To find them crushed beneath Fate's iron  
heel;  
We strive, and fail; we reason, and are lost;  
We love,—and we touch God.

## COMPENSATION.

---

I AM not a prosperous man ;  
The ships I send to sea  
Are apt to meet some strange defeat  
Ere they come back to me.  
And her eyes are dulled with care ;  
And the castle that serves our prime  
Is a poor affair to those in the air  
We built in our courting time.

This morning, waking slow

To a sense of the coming day,

Of the life too mean, and the might have been,  
My coward heart gave way.  
My heart appalled sank down ;  
But rose again with a leap  
At our delight when at dead of night  
Our babe laughed out in his sleep.



## AN OLD MAID.

---

SITTING in the twilight,  
Looking out into the rain,  
Through the blurred and dripping dimness  
Of my window-pane:  
Waiting in the chilly twilight  
For the supper bell to ring,  
Float a flood of fancies o'er me—  
Thoughts of the Spring.

Oh, the early Spring-time!

In the woodlands, even now,

Life is rising, tightly swelling  
Twig and bulb and bough.

Through the clods the moss is pushing;  
Homeward birds are on the wing;  
Earth is quick with coming glory—  
Oh, for the Spring!

Spring has something sweeter;  
Leaves unfolded thick and brown,  
Bursting soon, will drop their shadows,  
Trembling softly down.  
Buds will bloom and skies will deepen;  
Waters flash and woodlands ring;  
Through long grass the brooks will rustle—  
Oh, for the Spring!

Life has something sweeter;  
Strange, to feel old fancies start,  
Violet-sweet, of youth and passion,  
From my wrinkled heart:  
May agone, whose flowers were kisses—  
May, whose songs but one could sing;  
Heart abloom, so sudden blighted—  
Ah, my lost Spring!

Still something sweeter;  
There's a home-love underlies  
Passion, as the fruit that greatens  
When the blossom dies.

Plans of homestead, long forgotten!  
Plans that fancy used to bring

Round me in the fragrant twilight  
Of my lost Spring.

Still something sweeter;  
Other dreams about me stand;  
Thrills a round cheek on my bosom—  
Feels a little hand.  
Baby eyes in mine are smiling;  
Baby fingers round me cling;  
Baby lips are lisping “Mother”—  
GOD! my lost Spring.

➤MISMATED.

---

A COMMON spring of water, sudden  
welling,

Unheralded, from some unseen impelling,

Unrecognized, began his life alone.

A rare and haughty vine looked down above  
him,

Unclasped her climbing glory, stooped to love  
him,

And wreathed herself about his curb of stone.

Ah, happy fount! Content in upward smiling,

To feel no life but in her fond beguiling,  
To see no world but through her veil of green!  
And happy vine, secure in downward gazing,  
To find one theme his heart forever praising—  
The crystal cup a throne, and she the queen!

I speak. I grew about him, ever dearer;  
The water rose to meet me, ever nearer;  
The water passed one day his curb of stone.  
Was it a weak escape from righteous boundings,  
Or yet a righteous scorn of false surroundings?  
I only know I live my life alone.

Alone? The smiling fountain seems to chide  
me—

The constant fountain, rooted still beside  
me,

And speaking wistful words I toil to hear;  
Ah, how alone! The mystic words confound  
me;

And still the awakened fountain yearns beyond  
me,

Streaming to some unknown I may not near.

“Oh, list,” he cries, “the wondrous voices  
calling!

I hear a hundred streams in silver falling;  
I feel the far-off pulses of the sea—  
Oh, come!” Then all my length beside him  
faring,

I strive and strain for growth, and soon,  
despairing,

I pause and wonder where the wrong can  
be,

Were we not equal? Nay, I stooped, from  
climbing,

To his obscure, to list the golden chiming,  
So faint to all the world, so plain to me.

*Now, 'twere some broad fair streamlet, onward  
tending,*

Should mate with him, and both, serenely  
blending,

Move in a grand accordance to the sea.

I tend not so; I hear no voices calling;  
I have no care for rivers silver-falling;  
I hate the far-off sea that wrought my pain.  
Oh for some spell of change, my life new-  
aiming !

Or best, by spells his too much life reclaiming,  
Hold all within the fountain-curb again !



## A HOUSEKEEPER'S TRAGEDY.

---

ONE day as I wandered, I heard a complaining,

And saw a poor woman, the picture of gloom ;  
She glared at the mud on her door-step, ('twas  
raining,)

And this was her wail as she wielded her broom :

“Oh ! life is a toil, and love is a trouble,  
And beauty will fade, and riches will flee,  
And pleasures they dwindle, and prices they  
double,

And nothing is what I could wish it to be.

"There's too much of worriment goes to a  
bonnet;

There's too much of ironing goes to a shirt;

There's nothing that pays for the time you  
waste on it;

There's nothing that lasts but trouble and dirt.

"In March it is mud; it's slush in December;  
The midsummer breezes are loaded with dust;  
In Fall the leaves litter; in muggy September  
The wall-paper rots and the candlesticks rust.

"There are worms in the cherries, and slugs  
in the roses,

And ants in the sugar, and mice in the pies;

The rubbish of spiders no mortal supposes,  
And ravaging roaches, and damaging flies.

“It’s sweeping at six, and it’s dusting at seven;  
It’s victuals at eight, and it’s dishes at nine;  
It’s potting and panning from ten to eleven;  
We scarce break our fast ere we plan how to  
dine.

“With grease and with grime, from corner to  
centre,  
Forever at war, and forever alert,  
No rest for a day, lest the enemy enter—  
I spend my whole life in a struggle with  
dirt.

“Last night, in my dream, I was stationed for-  
ever

On a little bare isle in the midst of the sea ;  
My one chance of life, with a ceaseless endeavor,  
To sweep off the waves ere they swept over me.

“Alas ! 'twas no dream—again I behold it !  
I yield ; I am helpless my fate to avert.—”  
She rolled down her sleeves, her apron she  
folded ;  
Then lay down and died, and was buried in  
dirt.

## I F.

---

O H, were I a billow, a billow,  
And thou my shore should be,  
I'd gather my measure of ocean treasure,  
And dance myself to thee ;  
I'd leave the winds aside,  
And lead the lagging tide,  
Resting never, and dancing ever,  
To fling my life on thee.

Oh, were I a lily, a lily,  
And thou my charméd bee,

I'd lure thee, and love thee, and close above  
thee,

And ne'er would set thee free;

The wrathful sun might pale,

The scolding winds might rail,

So, dying together, my leaves should wither  
O'er thee, my love, o'er thee.

Oh, were I a willow, a willow,

And thou my breeze should be,

Still closer creeping, each small leaf steeping,  
Till all were filled with thee;

Or rise in wrathful gale,

And roar through all the vale,

I'd fling, imploring, my arms adoring,  
And bow, oh Storm, to thee.

Oh, were I a roselet, a roselet,  
And thou my sun should be,  
I'd gather the sweetness of June's completeness  
In one red kiss for thee ;  
My heart would stand a-swoon  
For pure excess of June,  
Till, flushed with fulness, athirst for coolness,  
It burst at last to thee.

## A LITTLE GOOSE.

---

THE chill November day was done,  
The working-world home-faring;  
The wind came roaring through the streets,  
And set the gas-lights flaring.  
And helplessly and aimlessly  
The scared old leaves were flying;  
When, mingled with the southing wind,  
I heard a small voice crying.

And shivering on the corner stood  
A child of four, or over;

No cloak nor hat her small soft arms  
And wind-blown curls to cover.

Her dimpled face was stained with tears;  
Her round blue eyes ran over;  
She cherished in her wee cold hand  
A bunch of faded clover.

And, one hand round her treasure, while  
She slipped in mine the other,  
Half-scared, half-confidential, said,  
“Oh, please, I want my mother.”  
“Tell me your street and number, pet;  
Don’t cry; I’ll take you to it.”  
Sobbing she answered, “I forget;  
The organ made me do it.

“ He came and played at Miller’s step;  
The monkey took the money;  
I followed down the street, because  
That monkey was so funny.  
I’ve walked about a hundred hours  
From one street to another;  
The monkey’s gone, I’ve spoiled my flowers;  
—Oh, please, I want my mother.”

“ But what’s your mother’s name, and what  
The street?—now think a minute.”

“ My mother’s name is Mother Dear;  
The street—I can’t begin it.”

“ But what is strange about the house,  
Or new, not like the others?”

“I guess you mean my trundle-bed,  
Mine and my little brother’s.

“Oh, dear, I ought to be at home  
To help him say his prayers;  
He’s such a baby, he forgets;  
And we are both such players;  
And there’s a bar between, to keep  
From pitching on each other,  
For Harry rolls when he’s asleep;  
—Oh, dear, I want my mother!”

The sky grew stormy; people passed  
All muffled, homeward faring.

“ You’ll have to spend the night with me,”

I said at last, despairing.

I tied a ’kerchief round her neck.

—“ What ribbon’s this, my blossom?

“ Why, don’t you know?” she smiling said,

And drew it from her bosom.

A card, with number, street and name!

My eyes astonished met it;

“ For,” said the little one, “ you see

I might some time forget it;

And so I wear a little thing

That tells you all about it;

For mother says she’s very sure

I would get lost without it.”

## THE SEA AND THE STREAMS.

---

LAST night I crossed the sand, through  
mist and darkness,  
To where, in some new spasm of expectation,  
As if this time, at last, the land were yielding,  
The sea heaved all his weight against the  
shore;  
Then back he fled, with still the old amaze-  
ment;  
For still he could not pass the line God's  
finger

Had left along the sand: then fell to calling,  
"More—more!" and league on league up-  
thundered,—“More!”

“O rivers, bring more life; O streams, assuage  
me;

Ye wells of freshness in the forests hiding,  
And battling torrents white that rend the  
mountains,

And rock-pools gleaming on some Alpine  
crown,

Ye royal streams, on all your course attended  
By forest nobles, with their choirs of music,  
Ye underground blind lives, still groping sea-  
ward,

O fill my need ; bring more—bring all—come  
down !”

All the dark world stood waiting for the  
morning ;

But on heaven’s face there seemed a hint of  
message

Which yet it must not speak. No more in  
thunder,

But hollow-sweet, the sea. “ O waters, come !  
Ye prisoned streams, break forth—in me is  
freedom ;

Ye faltering, aimless streams, I am your  
mission ;

Ye restless, seeking streams, I am your  
meaning;

Ye wandering, weary streams, I am your  
home.

Still in the starry dark the world stood wait-  
ing;

But in the conscious East, behold, the message;  
A thrill, a flush, a miracle, a sunrise!

And ocean held his pulse. Then came to me  
Clear in that moment's glowing, awful silence,  
From near and far a sound of answering  
voices,

A many-sounding song of waters moving  
In universal cadence to the sea.

O wonderful ! I heard the panting hurry  
Of one fine rill that pushed beneath a pebble ;  
I heard the hollow plunge, down sunless gorges,  
Of a lost cataract falling all alone ;  
I heard a meadow brook through long grass  
swashing ;  
I heard a garden fountain, tinkle, tinkle ;  
I heard the dreadful grating of the glaciers  
In slow, vast movement down a world of  
stone.

See, the far hills smile back the rosy mes-  
sage ;  
The tree-tops shine ; from village chimneys  
rising,

Each dun smoke changes to a golden geyser;  
The lark's wing flashes on his upward way.  
Still calls the sea; the streams I hear no  
longer,  
Lost in a rising swarm of sounds and voices;  
For now a sea of light fills earth and heaven,  
And all the joyful world awakes—'Tis day!



## A CHILD'S EARLY LESSONS.

---

SUMMER winds, Summer winds, where  
are ye hieing,

Now that the bees and the blossoms have flown?

The old leaves are dead, and the young leaves  
are dying,

And I shall be left with the Autumn alone.

Stay, for I pine with this stately new-comer;

Her breath is so chill, and her looks are so wan.

“Nay, little maid, we are friends of the  
Summer;

Summer friends fly when the Autumn comes  
on.”

Little birds, little birds, where are ye flying?  
Taking all music away in your tone:  
The forests are fading, the flowers are dying,  
And I shall be left with the Autumn alone.  
Stay, pretty songsters, and say for what reason  
You leave the poor child who has loved you  
so long.

“Nay, little maid, we are friends of the season;  
Summer friends fly when the Autumn comes  
on.”

Roses, sweet crimson hearts, why are ye paling?  
Why in my path so rebukingly bow?  
Were ye not cherished with love never failing?  
Will ye not tarry and comfort me now?

We who have joyed in the sunshine together,  
Together will mourn now the glory is gone.  
"Peace foolish maiden, we change with the  
weather;  
Summer love cools when the Autumn comes  
on."



## SEVENTEEN.

---

WHILE the sweet Spring earth rejoices,  
And the forests, old and dim,  
Populous with little voices,  
Raise their trilling hymn,—  
Chime *our* songs in joyous pleading,  
With the music of the day,  
We are young, and Time is speeding;  
Sweet Time, stay!

We would hold the hasty hours,  
Ope them to the living core,

Leaf by leaf, like folded flowers,

Till they glow no more.

We are mated with the present;

Bosom friends with dear to-day;

Loving best the latest minute;

Sweet Time, stay.

Sovereign Youth! All dainty spirits

Wait on us from earth and air;

From the common life distilling

But its essence rare.

Golden sounds, to age so leaden;

Eden sights, to age so drear;

Sweet illusions, subtle feelings

Age would smile to hear.

Happy Youth! When fearless bosoms,  
With their wealth of follies rare,  
Loose their thoughts, like summer blossoms,  
To the generous air.  
  
When we sit and mock at sorrow,  
Looking in each others' eyes,  
Greeting every new to-morrow  
With a new surprise.

Hope is with us, chanting ever  
Of some fair untried to-be;  
Lurking Love hath prisoned never  
Hearts so blithe and free.  
  
Yet, unseen, a fairy splendor  
O'er the prosing world he flings;

Everywhere we hear the rushing  
Of his rising wings.

As the tender crescent holdeth  
All the moon within its rim,  
So the silver present foldeth  
All the future dim.

Ah, the prophet moon is sweetest,  
And the life is best to-day;  
Life is best when time is fleetest;  
Sweet Time, stay!

## THIRTY-FOUR.

---

I CANNOT sing as once I sung  
When life with rhyme so close engaged,  
When you and I were very young  
Instead of slightly middle-aged.

Then all my thought and all my song  
Were music, roses, honey-dew;  
And most the dainty moonlight throng  
Of maiden fancies, strange and new.

All strange, yet true; as when we gaze  
In summer skies, their best to win,  
What seemed the sky will part in haze,  
And show a deeper heaven within.

A deeper heaven—a deepening soul;  
Youth's rosy mist-wreaths pass away:  
They bare new spaces as they roll,  
And depths unknown to yesterday.

And farther depths, and space more grand,  
And life increasing more and more,  
As on each yesterday we stand,  
And grasp to-day, till youth is o'er.

Youth is not o'er; the ripe fruit holds  
The blossom's sweetness in its sphere:  
The larger life the less enfolds,  
And nought is lost, but more is here.

And more will be; and more with time  
Life's scope and meaning we shall see,  
And what shall keep the soul at prime  
Through all the far eternity.



## A CAUTION.

---

LOVE hailed a little maid  
Romping through the meadow;  
Hedless in the sun she played,  
Scornful of the shadow.

“Come with me,” whispered he;  
“Listen, sweet, to love and reason.”  
“By and by,” she mocked reply,  
“Love’s not in season.”

Years went, years came,  
Light mixed with shadow;  
Love met the maid again  
Dreaming through the meadow.

“Be not coy,” urged the boy,  
“List in time to love and reason.”  
“By and by,” she mused reply,  
“Love’s still in season.”

Years went, years came,  
Light turned to shadow;  
Love saw the maid again,  
Waiting in the meadow.  
“Pass no more, my dream is o’er;  
I can listen now to reason.”  
“Keep thee coy,” mocked the boy;  
“Love’s out of season.”

## EXCEPTIONAL.

---

NOT by one gauge of fitness or unfitness

Judge we the lives around us, more than  
GOD

Asks of each plant the selfsame bloom for  
witness

Of equal sunshine poured upon its sod.

And judge not him whose unfamiliar nature,  
Higher or lower, differs from the rest;

Springs from the old seed in new form and  
stature;

Crosses the gardener's rules of worst and  
best.

Suppose some human form, embalmed for  
ages,

Were suddenly to catch its soul again;  
To write anew, upon Time's later pages,  
Its varied chronicle of joy and pain.

His heart brimful of memories and old  
yearning,

A quaint sweet harp, with none that know  
its tone;

His home-thoughts locked in long forgotten  
learning, .

And none can find the key ; he is alone.

He stands with outstretched arms, half sure,  
half fearing ;

He peers in every face with anxious eye ;  
He listens ever in the hope of hearing  
An echo to his call, but all pass by.

Yet welcome, though we comprehend not  
wholly

His soul's strange idioms and peculiar  
needs :

Mayhap his hands, that learn our ways so  
slowly,

Come bearing worthy fruits and precious  
seeds

From fields we know not: that far gaze, un-  
heeding

So oft the nearest gain, the moment's  
bloom,

Mayhap some word from God to man is  
reading,

Which none would else interpret: give him  
room.

## WAITING.

---

**S**IX: nay, at six, in any case  
He could not come; 'tis evening chime,  
And if I reach the trysting place  
Whole hours before the trysting time,  
'Tis not with any hope to see  
Unseemly soon my love appear;  
He is no idle maid like me;  
He has high things to do and bear;

And not for worlds would I that he  
For love should weakly eager be.

Seven: still an hour; not long to wait;

But sixty minutes—fifty-nine,

Scarce time to quite anticipate

My joy—not near enough, in fine.

And yet—it might be—some new chance,

Some plot to take me by surprise—

If round yon rock a form should glance

And strike on my astonished eyes!

Nay, down, my heart! It is not he;

True love must not impatient be.

Eight: *now*, my heart! A step this way,

... 'Tis past. Yon horse... It disappears.

A shout... 'Tis but the watch-dog's bay—

Ah, he is playing with my fears,  
Or sleep has held him over-long,  
(Could *I* sleep?) Or his friends detain,  
(Would friends keep *me*?) Or duties throng;  
Or—see this sky—he hates the rain.  
No, no; he keeps his tryst with me;  
True love shall not suspicious be.

Nine: now by all I feel this hour,  
This is no love! and for my part,  
I pray he never more have power  
To outrage thus a woman's heart.

Let him have never wife and child  
To waste their hours at window-pane;

Let him on no home-hearth be coiled  
To bask, and give no warmth again.  
Gorge him with comforts—let him be  
From love's least obligation free.

Ten ; and the night grows black and chill ;  
The way is long ; the road is lone.  
Who knows what thousand forms of ill  
May be along that pathway strewn ?  
A stumbling horse ; a secret foe ;  
Even murder slinking on his track ;  
The strife in darkness—the last blow—  
Oh would some chance might turn him back !  
Peace ; he is no poltroon like me :  
His own right arm his guard shall be.

Eleven : 'tis o'er. My hope is gone!

He will not come. My life is drear.

Aha, my love—my truth—my own,

I knew—I knew you would be here!

Art hurt? Art weary? Rest thee now;

Nay, rest and speak not, while I pour

Through living fingers on thy brow

My too much life in thine once more.

Such thoughts I had—I blush to tell.

I see thy face and all is well.

## FARM MUSIC.

---

IN the morning, dim and sweet,  
Slanting glints the sun;  
The milkmaid trips with hurrying feet,  
The farmer's day is begun.  
  
Hark! 'tis the mower blithe,  
As he sharpens his trusty scythe,—  
Crink, crank—crink, crank!  
  
In the dewy morning air.

In the summer, near to noon,  
Flaming climbs the sun;

The scythe-blades sweep to a pleasant tune,  
And the task goes merrily on.

Hark! shrill and fine,  
The locust's hot-weather sign,—  
Cree-ee, cree-ee!

In the blazing morning air.

In the summer day at noon,  
Right over glares the sun;  
The mowers sweep to a slower tune,  
And wish the task were done.

Hark! Hip—hurrah!  
The dinner horn sounds afar,—  
Ta—tara—tara, tara!

In the seething noontide air.

In the lazy afternoon,

Homeward looks the sun;

The meadow stream makes a tinkling tune,

The mowers have nearly done.

Hark! a chattering loud,

'Tis the noisy crows in a crowd,

Caw, caw, caw, caw!

Through all the hazy air.

The primrose wakes to bloom;

Downward rolls the sun;

The west is fire, the east is gloom,

The mowers' task is done.

And hist—hark!

What rings through the fragrant dark?

Whippoorwill, whippoorwill!

Through all the evening air.

East and west are gloom,

But the moon is rising fair;

And the night is warm, and the clover bloom

Sweetens all the air.

And hist—hark!

Who calls through the silver dark?

Hoo, hoo, tu whit, tu hoo!

Through all the midnight air.

## AN ANGEL'S VISIT.

---

HE stood in the harvest-field at noon,  
And sang aloud for the joy of living.  
She said: "'Tis the sun that I drink like wine,  
To my heart this gladness giving."

Rank upon rank the wheat fell slain;  
The reapers ceased. "'Tis sure the splendor  
Of sloping sunset light that thrills  
My breast with a bliss so tender."

Up and up the blazing hills  
Climbed the night from the misty meadows.  
"Can they be stars, or living eyes  
That bend on me from the shadows?"

"Greeting!" "And may you speak, indeed?"  
All in the dark her sense grew clearer;  
She knew that she had, for company,  
All day an angel near her.

"May you tell of the life divine,  
To us unknown, to angels given?"  
"Count me your earthly joys, and I  
May teach you those of heaven."

“They say the pleasures of earth are vain;  
Delusions all, to lure from duty;  
But while GOD hangs his bow in the rain,  
Can I help my joy in beauty?

“And while he quickens the air with song,  
My breaths with scent, my fruits with flavor,  
Will he, dear angel, count as sin  
My life in sound and savor?

“See, at our feet a glow-worm shines;  
Lo! in the East a star arises;  
And Thought may climb from worm to world  
Forever through fresh surprises:

“And thought is joy. . . . And, hark! in the vale  
Music, and merry steps pursuing;  
They leap in the dance—a soul in my blood  
Cries out,—Awake, be doing!

“Action is joy; or power at play,  
Or power at work in world emprises:  
Action is life; part from the deed,  
More from the doing rises.”

“And are these all?” She flushed in the dark.  
“These are not all. I have a lover;  
At sound of his voice, at touch of his hand,  
The cup of my life runs over.

“Once, unknowing, we looked and neared,  
And doubted, and neared, and rested never,  
Till life seized life, as flame meets flame,  
To escape no more forever.

“Lover and husband; then was love  
The wine of my life, all life enhancing:  
Now 'tis my bread, too needful and sweet  
To be kept for feast-day chancing.

“I have a child.” She seemed to change;  
The deep content of some brooding creature  
Looked from her eyes. “O, sweet and strange!  
Angel, be thou my teacher:

“When He made us one in a babe,  
Was it for joy, or sorest proving?  
For now I fear no heaven could win  
Our hearts from earthly loving.

“I have a friend. Howso I err,  
I see her uplifting love bend o'er me;  
Howso I climb to my best, I know  
Her foot will be there before me.

“Howso parted, we must be nigh,  
Held by old years of every weather;  
The best new love would be less than ours  
Who have lived our lives together.

“Now, lest forever I fail to see  
Right skies, through clouds so bright and  
tender,  
Show me true joy.” The angel’s smile  
Lit all the night with splendor.

“Save that to Love and Learn and Do  
In wondrous measure to us is given;  
Save that we see the face of GOD,  
You have named the joys of heaven.”

## THORNS.

---

ONE rose, of all in the garden,  
I love the best to see.

To others, other are fairer,  
But this is queen to me.

Its thorns are many and sharp,  
But its blooms are many and fair;  
And who would forego a rose,  
The pang of a thorn to spare?

Its thorns are many and sharp,  
But I well can bear the pain,  
For they strike, and then, repenting,  
Are straight withdrawn again.

But once, and at unaware,  
A prickle, in sudden ire,  
Burrowed into my hand,  
Keen as a point of fire.

And still it burns and rankles;  
I cannot still its ado:  
Even to clasp a rose  
Quickens the sting anew.

Even the tenderest touch  
Must give me only pain;  
For this time, when it struck,  
It let the thorn remain.

I know, in a few to-morrows  
The hurt full healed will be:  
Twill be longer ere the rose  
Is quite the same to me.

## AN OLD ROSE.

---

AS I wandered, lightly musing,  
Through the Roses in their pride,  
Culling this, or that refusing,  
Casting many a bloom aside,  
In my way a wilted flower  
Simpered still, and kept her ground;  
Loth to lose her olden power,  
Loth to leave the belles around.

Fair, though wrinkled; sweet, though faded;  
Not a leaf had left its core:

Must she then, by all unheeded,  
Through all time be known no more?  
Is there any life for beauty  
After beauty's dreary close?  
Death is sure the only duty  
Of a poor old Rose.

Still the Rose, her doom refusing,  
Smiling hides her blight and pain;  
While each little wind at choosing  
Bares the unseemly spots again.  
Yield thy spicy leaves, dear beauty,  
Ere their life to poison grows;  
Spreading sweets is still the duty  
Of a poor old Rose.

Die, old Rose; and live forever  
Soul of scent that cannot die;  
Live in every lover's favor,  
Every poet's minstrelsy.  
Scatter thou, and I will gather,  
Standing fast, through winter's snows,  
In a dream of summer weather  
From a poor old Rose.



## AN OLD BUTTERFLY.

---

HIS gorgeous plumes were a little worn;  
One splendid wing was a trifle torn;  
And the season waned. "How can it be  
That I stand with my life unlived?" said he.  
"Heigho!" said the butterfly,  
"Would that I knew the reason why."

"Surely I loved the Violet pure,  
And day by day to her nook obscure  
I lowered my glorious wings, and quaffed  
With a constant mind her perfumed draught.  
But how strangely coarse her foliage grows;  
Besides—at that moment I saw the Rose.

“I saw the Rose, and I knew my fate.  
Slow she unfolded; I would not wait,  
But prayed and fretted from hour to hour,  
Till opened at last the perfect flower.  
. . . A perfect flower? That cannot be,  
Or how could she lose her hold on me?

“For your Rose is burning sweet; in fine  
She is over-sweet to a taste like mine;  
Too rich, too much, to one who has seen  
In a garden beyond, the Lily queen.  
I saw the Lily, and all was o'er:  
The Rose could reign in my heart no more.

“Creamy white is the perfect hue.

Cold she seemed; with a great ado  
I won my welcome. Too late I see  
She cannot command the depths in me.  
Heigho!" said the butterfly,  
"What is it ails each love I try?"

And the season waned. No more he flies;  
On a Sunflower's bosom broad he lies.  
And after all, it is sad, we say,  
To think he has thrown himself away;  
Could it have been,—the reason why,  
That anything ailed the butterfly?

## A LITTLE PROPHET.

---

POKE the nightingale to the rose,  
Once, so early in the morning,  
Not a creature in all the glen,  
Wearied and dull with a night of rain,  
Had perceived a warning.  
“Yet,” he said, “’tis morning.”

Night of rain, night of gloom;  
Ah, how sad for the birds a-building!  
Soaking nests and blossoms torn,

And in all the east no sign of morn  
The weeping woodlands gilding.  
“Yet,” he sang, “’tis morning.”

“Nay, he raves;” said the draggled flowers;  
“Sure, he raves;” said the birds together.  
Back to their streaming boughs they went,  
Ragged and bunched with discontent  
At such unheard-of weather.

“Still,” he sang, “’tis morning.”

“Waken,” he cried, “ye creatures all,  
Violets, lift your dripping faces;  
Bob-o-link, robin, arise and sing;

Choral larks, announce your king;  
Thrushes, choose your places;  
For I am sure 'tis morning."

Darkness all; along the east,  
Hill on hill lay the awful thunder  
—All in a flash, O wondrous sight!  
Those dreadful gates of storm and night  
Burst and rolled asunder.  
Lo, the Sun! 'Twas morning.

Back and back from their king they rolled;  
Grand he arose, and smiled around him.  
Each small creature in wood and glen,

Blackbird, throstle, and tiny wren,  
Broke the spell that bound him.

“Joy!” they rang; “’tis morning!”

Music and perfume everywhere;

All the air in a golden glory;  
Crowds of praisers fill the vale.

But really ’twas the nightingale  
Who first told the story.

He first said, “’Tis morning.”

## TO A FEW.

---

PLAY-TIME for the young;  
Rest-time for the faint and old;  
Soft leaves for the trees, now hung  
In rattling ice so cold;  
Freedom for the sorely bound;  
Homes for those who would not rove;  
For myself, the sweet world round,  
Give the boon of love.

Love is life—is GOD:

Heaven is love, and lies around,

And the pathway oftenest trod

Is its holiest ground.

So my hopes shall be as prayers,

Not to some dim realm above,

But the heaven the lowest shares,

To near hearts for love.

Love me for my love:

Love is neither bought nor sold;

But itself its price can prove,

Or itself can hold.

I would ask it, as the sun

Asks the earth through April hours;

Ye should give, as earth, full won,

Makes reply in flowers.

Love me for my faults;

Love me most, oh brave and strong,

When my fainting spirit halts

Weakly in the wrong.

Frailest tree needs firmest stay;

Weakest child has closest care;

Dearest loved of Jesus, they

Whose reproach he bare.

Love me when I doubt;

When the heart's own self-mistrust

Compasses the soul about

With a dimming rust.

“They will answer,” Hope speaks clear;

From the heart quick, sweet words come:

“Will they answer?” whispers Fear,  
And the lips are dumb.

“Shall they in surprise  
Put thy awkward proffer by,  
Or with careless words suffice  
Thy more, earnest cry?”  
So my doubts my heart would steel,  
Icing o'er its real glow:  
Love me, friends, for what I feel,  
Not for what I show.

## A PRISON HOME.

---

O WEARY prison fortress  
Where year by year I lie,  
Until the holy men have time  
To bring me out to die.  
For still with blood and rack and fire  
The work upon their hands has grown;  
And still I pine in dungeon cell  
Forgotten and alone.

Alone? What dimpled elbows  
Are leaning on my knee?  
What sound of saucy laughter,  
Fills all the air with glee?  
My prison-born; she came to free  
Her mother's soul, and break her thrall;  
So life by life my home has gone  
Till she and I are all.

Our prison sounds are loathsome  
To one who hears them long;  
The murderer talking to himself,  
The drunkard's crazy song;  
But on my ear a prattle sweet,  
Or childish song forever rings;

Save when, in friendship's confidence,  
We talk of deeper things.

The jail-dogs are her playmates;  
The jailer is her thrall;  
She finds a friend in every cell,  
And wins their best from all.  
Within her sphere of innocence  
No evil thought will come,  
And every face is kindly,  
And all the place is home.

Without, the world is changing;  
Some say, we make for liberty:

Meantime, the changes in her eyes  
Are all of life to me.  
She's more to me than daily bread,  
And more than freedom after thrall.  
My hope, my care, my comforter,  
My pet, my friend, my all !



## THE SEASONS.

---

ALL through the valley sweet music was  
sounding,

Ringing the praise of the beautiful day.

Light through the valley a young child was  
bounding;

'Twas dear little Spring, with the blossoms at  
play.

Schoolmaster Winter looked back at the  
singing:

—“Child, I will teach thee a lesson to-day.”

But Spring at the proser a violet flinging,  
Gloomy old Winter strode frowning away.

Oh welcome to all was the little new-comer,  
And happy each wight in her favor to share:  
So lovely she grew that they christened her  
Summer

And thought she had wandered from paradise  
there.

“Tis shameful,” growled Winter, “that she  
should be spending  
In mirth and in music the minutes so rare,  
But weightier matters prevent my attending,  
So trusty aunt Autumn my message shall  
bear.”

Cheerless and chill as the mission that bound  
her,

Dreary aunt Autumn came forth to the day,  
And wrapping a misty old mantle around her,  
Harshly arrested the maid in her play.

“How can you sing while the season grows  
darker?”

List to the lesson I’ll read you to-day.”

But as Autumn collected dead leaves for a  
primer,

Sweet merry Summer slipped laughing away.

## DELAY.

---

THE year's worst is done;  
The wild winter's over:

Through the barren March wind  
I smell the June clover.

Through the scolding March wind  
I hear the rose sighing,  
And callow birds calling,  
And old birds replying.

In the roaring March wind  
The rivers rise crashing,

The huge broken winter  
Down their fronts dashing.  
And their moving is like  
To the freeing of a nation,  
Rending a rule  
'Mid a world's jubilation.

Hist! through the ground  
There is stirring and groping,  
Roots tingle, seeds thrill,  
In the dark hoping.  
"Life, give us life!  
Through the grave's long dejection,  
Sun, we believed!  
Sound now our resurrection."

Up the bare branches  
The life-blood is yearning.  
In their cold forest nooks  
The creatures are turning.  
"Is it time?" "Not yet;  
The frost lags belating."  
—Oh come, come, Spring!  
The world stands waiting.



## INCONSTANT.

---

### I.

IN the forest darkness I heard a little  
fountain,

Gurgling alone at the closing of the day;  
Came a thirsty shepherd-girl, weary from the  
mountain,

Bent above the mossy curb and pushed the  
ferns away.

Leaned across and drank, her hands together  
filling;

—Low laughed the fount, though the winds  
made moan :—

Starts and looks again, stung with sudden  
thrilling,

Looking at her own name carven on the  
stone.

## II.

Winter came, winter passed: up spoke the  
fountain,

Telling strange tales of the darkness and  
the rain.

June brought the shepherd-girl, dancing from  
the mountain,

Peering in the ferns for the happy word  
again.

When she stooped above the curb all the  
woods were ringing,

—Low laughed the fount, while the winds  
made moan.—

When she rose, the air was dead; sudden  
ceased her singing—

Looking at the new name carven on the  
stone.



## P R A Y E R S.

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A MOTHER prayed at the eventide  
With her child upon her breast.  
The angels came to her darkened room;  
And waited her behest.

“And GOD,” she asked, “Thou Glorious,  
O give my darling fame,  
Among the nobles of his land  
To win the noblest name.”

“And may there be some spirit near,  
My fervent wish to bear.”

But the doubtful angels silent stood,  
Nor moved to waft her prayer.

“And God,” she prayed, “Thou Infinite,  
O give my darling power;  
The might of soul that sways a host  
As the fierce wind sways a shower.

“And may there be some spirit near,  
My soul’s high wish to bear.”  
But the wondering angels silent stood  
Nor moved to waft her prayer.

“And God, who art all Beautiful,  
O make my darling fair,  
That he may still from life draw love,  
Life’s sweetest essence rare.

“So every heart shall be a harp,  
Beneath his touch to sound.”  
But the shuddering angels silent stood,  
And drooped their wings around.

“But if,” she prayed, “Thou Merciful,  
He may not grasp at fame,  
O grant him strength to face serene  
A cold world’s cruel blame;

“And if he shrink from earthly power,  
Nor aim to sway the time,  
Gird Thou his soul to cope with sin,  
A conqueror sublime.

“And if he sometime fail to strike  
Each heart to Love’s sweet tone,  
O may he tune to seraph height  
The music of his own.

“Now may there be some spirit near  
My humble wish to bear.”  
The angels rose on rushing wings  
In haste to waft her prayer.

## MY ROSE.

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WHEN the sun looks on it  
He makes it fair indeed;

When the sun looks through it  
It doth all sun exceed.

When thou wert beloved  
I crowned thee with my love;  
Now thou also lovest  
Thou art all crowns above.

## MY BROTHERS.

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I HAVE a sturdy brother that's very dear  
to me,

A little merry whirlwind that keeps the  
house in glee;

That keeps the house in torment, in wonder  
and in dread,

For still the restless foot brings woe upon  
the golden head.

What makes the child so winning? No  
wondrous gifts are here;

'Twill ever be a careless heart that lights  
those eyes so clear;  
And yet that nameless charm I see that shall,  
as from a throne,  
Sway higher souls, and deeper hearts than e'er  
shall be his own.

I have a quiet brother, with deep'ning twilight  
eyes,  
Where, as you gaze, new thoughts look forth,  
like stars from darkening skies;  
With a rich low voice, and earnest look, that  
seems with gentle ruth  
To plead with all for sympathy, and claim  
from all their truth.

My true, deep-hearted brother—yet if an  
impulse start,  
A constant fear of cold repulse still checks  
the leaping heart;  
And while, with yearning wild and strong, he  
fain would bare his soul,  
A doubting, sullen bashfulness aye holds him  
in control.

My shrinking, timid brother—yet far in those  
deep eyes,  
A wealth of love, a might of scorn, a hate of  
meanness lies;  
And when right bows, or great souls quail, or  
plotting small have sway,

The indignant angel scarce can bide its  
cramping bonds of clay.

My silent, haughty brother! I see thy trem-  
bling soul,

Like some fine strung Æolian, at every breath's  
control,

Shrink proudly from the world's rude touch,  
and singing all alone,

They soon will sneer, because they hear no  
music in thy tone.

Alas for thee my brother! I see the years  
press on,

A cold, dull crowd, with petty whips to beat  
thy spirit down;

Neglect shall crush, and falsehood goad with  
stings most keen and fine;

What duller hearts would bear unfelt shall  
eat like fire in thine.

Still it shall be thy fate to seek, and find no  
kin to thee;

To set thy mark too high, and mourn that  
others cannot see;

A stranger at thy mother's board—a pilgrim  
in thy land,

Whom many scorn, and some may love, but  
none will understand.

To strive, and fail; to love, and doubt; to trust,  
and suffer wrong;  
To side with right, and fight for truth, and  
find but meanness strong;  
Till thy sick tortured soul shall deem this  
sweet earth wholly vile—  
God shelter thee, my brother! I will pray  
for thee the while.









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